

By Bill Vidonic

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(Beaver, PA) — Around 3:30 p.m. Monday, a Beaver County police officer had trouble communicating with another officer standing down the road from him.

“I can’t believe I can see you but still can’t talk to you on this radio,” the officer was heard saying on a transmission through the Beaver County Emergency Services Center.

About 15 minutes later, U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire D-4, McCandless Township, presented Beaver County commissioners with \$681,500 that should help fix that problem, saying the money is “a big step in the right direction.”

Commission Chairman Tony Amadio noted that a green ceremonial cardboard check represented not only St. Patrick’s Day, but “all the green coming into Beaver County.”

Emergency Services director Wes Hill said Monday the money will be used to construct radio towers and related equipment, upgrade existing towers and upgrade equipment inside the dispatch center.

The upgrades will mean better communication for officers who are using handheld radios while on the streets, and also for transmissions from police cars.

Upgrades have also been done on communications for county firefighters, Hill said. A firefighter in Darlington can now use a handheld radio to talk directly to the emergency services center in Beaver, some 10 miles away.

It’s all part of a \$3 million to \$4 million emergency communications upgrade that the county’s been in the midst of, Hill said.

Last June, various emergency agencies found themselves unable to communicate with each other during Aliquippa’s floods.

The ultimate goal, Hill said, is that when all the upgrades are complete, firefighters, police and medical personnel will be able to talk to each other on the same frequency.